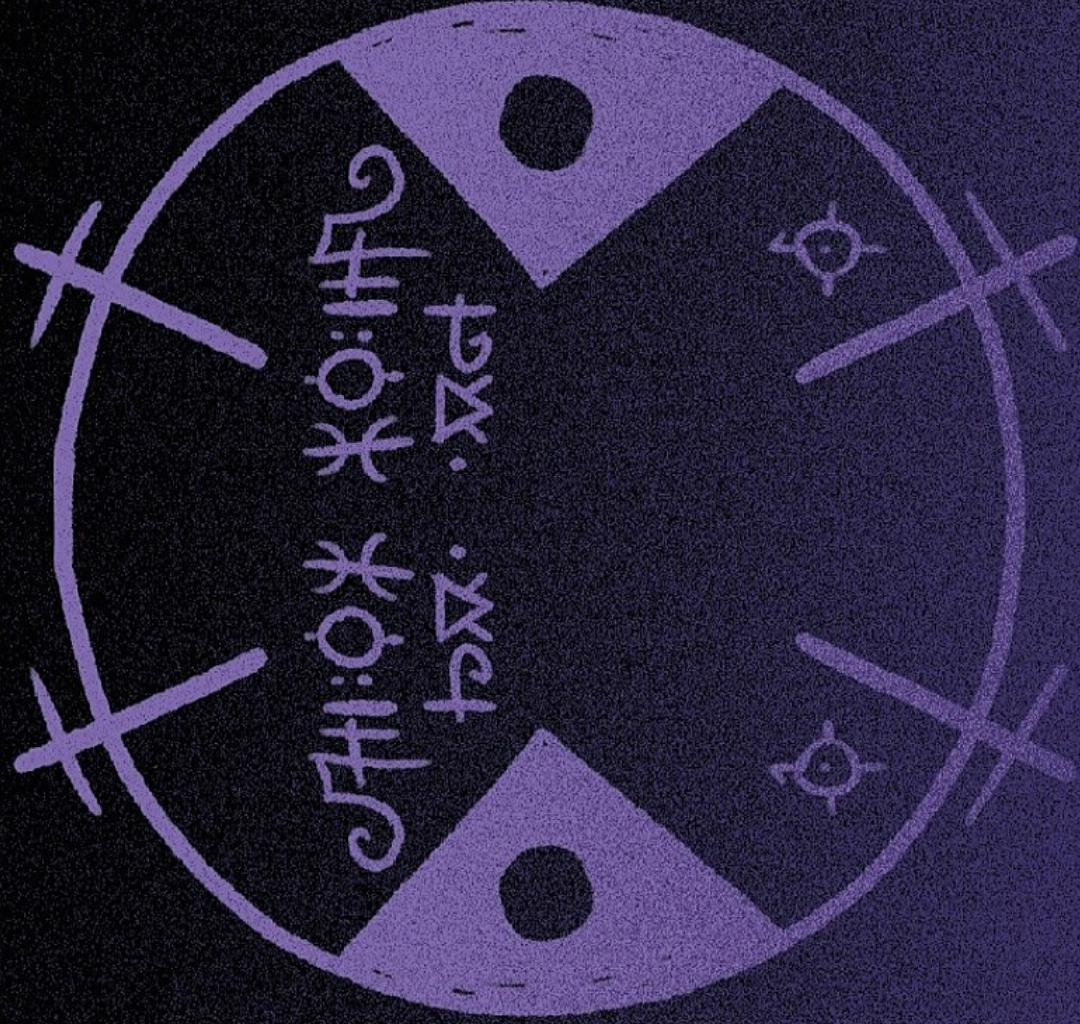


THE WITCH BOY



MOLLY KNOX POSTER+AG



THE
WITCH
BOY

MOLLY KNOX OSTER+AG

THE WITCH BOY

graphix

AN IMPRINT OF

SCHOLASTIC

Grandmother



Kieran



Jessamine



Holly



Tohor



Vervain



Samuel



Iris



Jade



Hazel



Linden



Brome



Persimmon



Juniper



Aster



Sedge



Ivy



Tupelo



Cygnus



Aquila



Lyra



**This book is dedicated to Wayfinder, the summer camp
in upstate New York where I first learned about magic.**

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Time for the
first lesson of the day,
my daughters.



Now, if you are hungry in the forest, you need not despair.

You can convince most trees to blossom and grow fruit, as long as you ask politely and address them using the proper terms.





Once you know
the tree's preferred
name, you can speak an
incantation to request
its fruit.



Plunk
Plunk
Plunk



ha ha!



plunk



And so, you
see . . .







I don't understand why Juniper and Hazel and them can all learn how to talk to trees and make potions and do spells and I can't.

It's not fair.

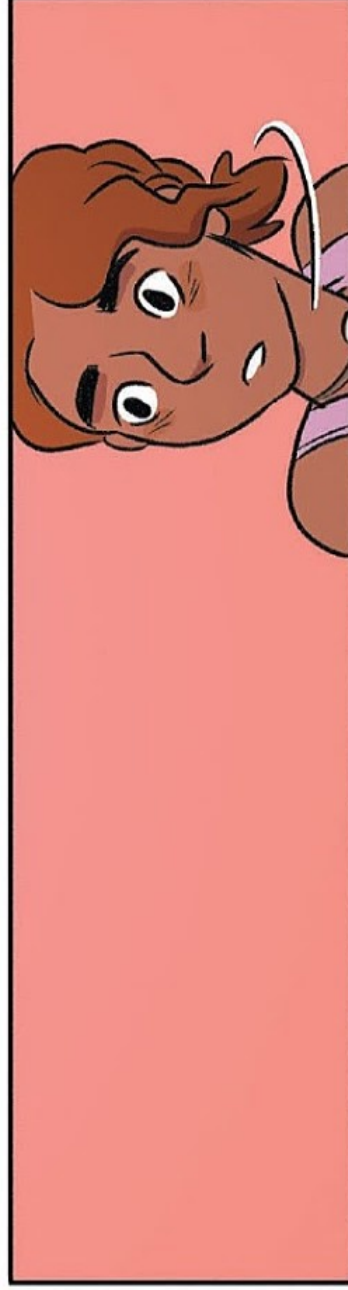


Women and men have different
types of magic, and witches pass down
their knowledge from mother to daughter.
That's how it is and how it's always been,
my son.

But it's not like
there's nothing for you!
Soon your shapeshifting
will begin, and with it, the
ability to see demons
and to fight them.

You'll be one
of the men.











Go on,
Aster.



Aster, we're
playing capture
the flag and we
need one more!
You wanna?











Aren't you supposed to tell me not to be doing this?



If you're going to be playing with witchery, at least get it right.



Which one are you, again?

Aster, Grandmother.



Well, just be careful, m'boy.













You're back
so soon!

How are the
Nakamoras?

Did the
problem end up
being a demon
after all?

We can talk about
work later. I want to
know everything that's
been going on at home!



Kitchen first.
It was a thirsty
drive.

I'll be right
back --

I was in
the middle of
a casting; let
me just finish
it up.





Animal dreams,
Aster.

Animal
spirits will come
to you in dreams
to see if you're
fit to receive
their gifts.



You came back
to help Aster
prepare for the
Finding?



That's
right.



I had a
dream about
some bees a
few weeks
ago.

But I'd just
been working in
the beehives,
so . . .

This time you'll
Find your first
form -- I can
smell it!



You Found
your form the
first time you
tried.

Well . . . yes,
but plenty of shifters
I know tried three,
even four years, before
a spirit approached
them.









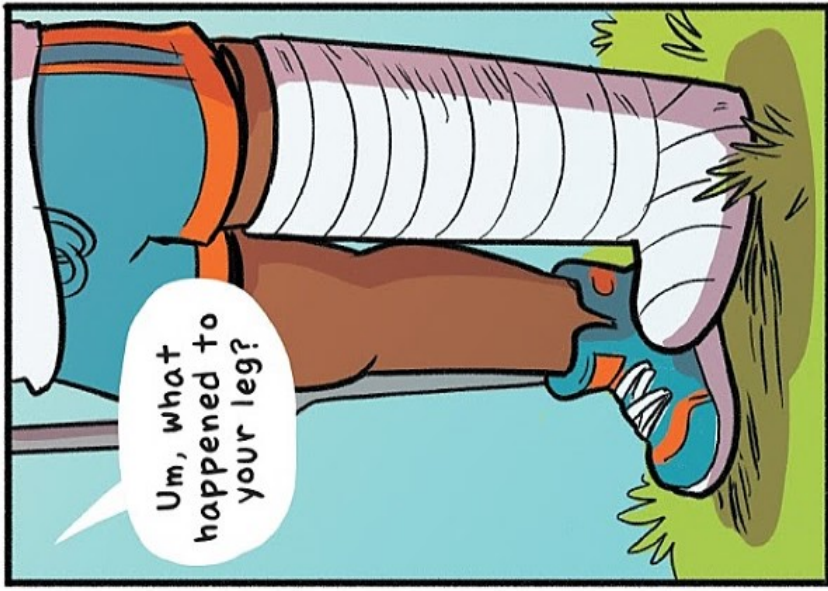


















For as long as anyone can
remember, and longer still, the
animal spirits that we share our
world with have offered the men
of our family a great gift.



We may speak
with them, enlist their
help, and, most powerful of
all, take their gifts and
assume their forms.



You will have had dreams
where you met with animals
and spoke with them.



These were spirits seeking
you out, deciding if you were
worthy of their favor.



Tonight, on the equinox, you will go out into the forest and seek a spirit of your own.

It may test you; pose you riddles or wrestle for dominance.



If you impress it, it will give you its form to wear.



Stay alert, be clever, and take what is offered.



I know this is your night, my son.



Only beneficial spirits
may cross the boundaries
of our property.



Be safe,
sons.

Tonight, especially,
there are demons waiting
outside the borders.





"crunch"
"crunch"







Easy, there,
easy.

My name
is --

Sedge!



Ssh! I'm
talking to an
animal spirit.



But the
boundaries --













There's neither
sign nor scent of
him. He must have
been taken.



This is a
bad night for
demons.

I always
think it's foolish,
having the Finding
on this night.









Three years
and two months.

Pat
Pat



Are you
helping Mom?

We're trying to scry
for Sedge, me and some
of the younger girls.



Scry?

Use magic to
look for him.

But none of the
normal bowls we use
are working, so I'm
looking for something
else . . .



You look in
a bowl?

In water.

In a silver bowl,
usually. Silver
for the moon.

And you reflect
the moon in it, and
you stir it counter-
clockwise, and --











A group of seven children are gathered in a forest clearing. In the center, a boy in a white shirt and blue pants sits on a log, talking to a girl in a yellow shirt. To his right, a boy in a green shirt and blue pants stands. Further right, a girl in a white shirt and blue pants sits on a log. In the background, a boy in a red shirt and a girl in an orange shirt stand near a large tree. A boy in a red vest and white shirt stands to the left. The forest has large trees with brown trunks and yellow and orange foliage. A speech bubble points from the boy in the white shirt to the text.

It's terrible what happened to Sedge, and everyone is working to find him.

A close-up of a girl with brown hair, wearing a pink shirt and blue pants, sitting on a log. She is looking up and to the right with a questioning expression. A speech bubble is next to her.

But do you know why it happened?

He stepped outside
the barrier.

That's correct,
Tupelo.

We are protected here,
because this is a place to
be safe and learn.

But outside the standing
stones, demons and broken spirits
and the fallen roam, preying on
humans -- although most people
don't know their true nature.

You can't live in
this house forever. You
must remember that, though
they are rare, there are
creatures that want to kill
you and worse.

That's why it's
important to learn
to fight, and that's
why we speak to
animal spirits.





An old badger came to me, and he wanted to wrestle, so I --



-- was a bird, definitely something with feathers, and it told me --



-- so once I caught it, he told me secrets of the treetops and said I would learn his form!



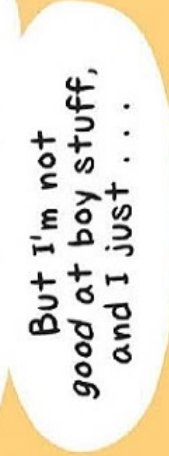
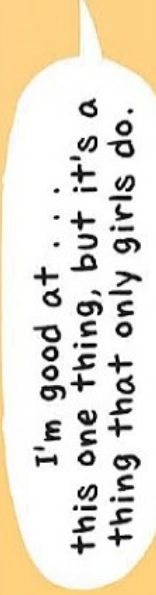














Ugh, tell me about it.



This year at school they stop having co-ed teams, and the guys have way more sports than the girls.

They split stuff up for boys and girls at your school?



Not everything. But sports, yeah, and that's what I really like.

At least I have softball, but . . .



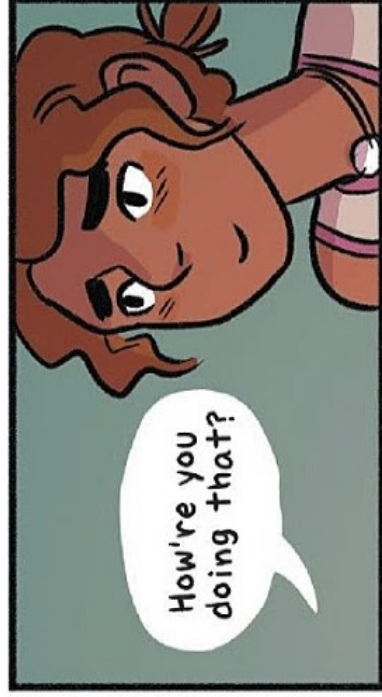
I probably won't get to play this year anyway.

















Something's wrong.

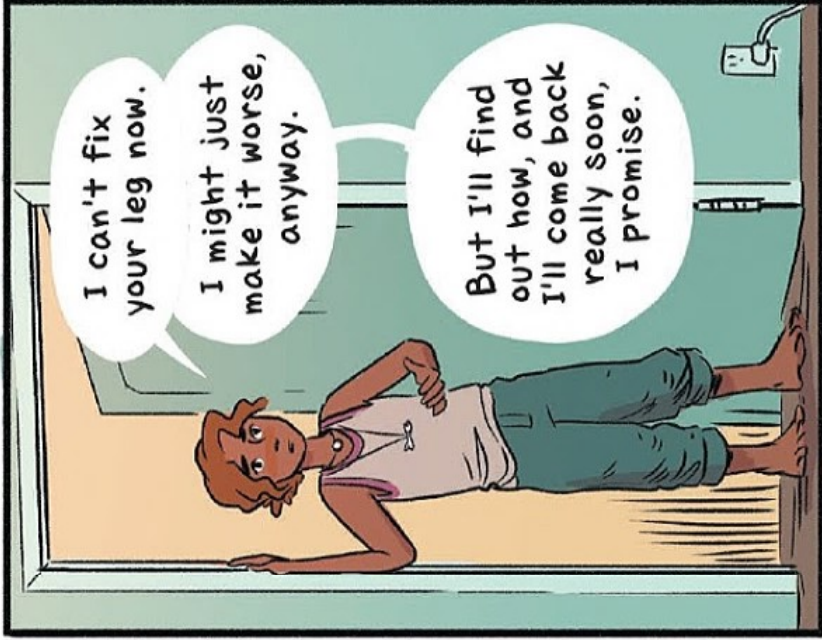
Not him, too!



My dads get worried when I stay out late, too. It's probably just --



No, there's been weird stuff happening. I have to go. I'm sorry.



I can't fix
your leg now.

I might just
make it worse,
anyway.

But I'll find
out how, and
I'll come back
really soon,
I promise.



Okay.



Hey, Aster?
Your magic?



I think it's
brilliant.







Something that sneaks through our boundaries and evades us at every turn.

It may be an animal spirit, but what would its motivation be?

It may be a demon we've never encountered before.



We need to stay on our guard.

We need to find out how this monster is getting to us, and where it's keeping our boys.

I refuse to believe they're . . . not alive.



If you kids see anything strange --

anything at all -- let us know.





You all have heard tales, my daughters, of the witches of old, who went into battle against rival clans and evil spirits.



We are lucky to live in this time and this country, where there is peace between witches and the evil spirits are not as bold as they once were.



But I cannot promise you lives free of battle -- especially with the evil that seems to have descended on our family.

And so
you must learn about our
house's weapons, passed down
from mother to daughter since
time immemorial.



We
have four
weapons.



The six stones,
for example --



toss them and
they will tell you things
about the future.





But if you wish to
restrain or capture
an enemy . . .



A net to trap
spirits or the wind
or an idea.



140000





















